

July 22, 1964

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NAAS, Dec 8-15-76

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Warren Commission Report

It is more and more apparent that the Warren Commission Report will be one of the most important news stories of the next two months, and I think we now have a good plan for your approval.

The report will consist of one summary volume and 17 supplemental volumes of hearings and evidence. The preparation of the report and the decision as to its contents is entirely a matter for the Commission. What happens after it is reported to you is entirely a matter for you. This distinction is being fully sustained in discussions between Lee Rankin and myself.

- Our initial plan had been that the report would be ready for submission to you on August 8, in the thought that you could then authorize its immediate publication about August 10 so as to get it out comfortably before the Democratic Convention. It now appears that this schedule is too tight, both for the final drafting of the report itself and for our own purpose of insuring widespread, dignified and effective publication of the report and its principal findings. An August publication runs the serious risk of slipshod work by the Commission, by the printers, or by the Press, and it is now my strong recommendation that we should defer the report until after the Democratic Convention.

The schedule we now propose is as follows:

That the Chief Justice and his Commission should present their report to you on August 31, the Monday after the Convention.

You would receive the report in page proof.

You could review it at once, and we are assuming that you would order its publication in full. You might also wish to write a brief introductory statement.

At the same time you could instruct your staff to arrange not only for dignified publication through the Government Printing Office, and distribution through the Superintendent of Documents, but also for the

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most sensible and careful arrangements to make the findings available fairly and efficiently to the American people and the world press. In this undertaking you might wish to establish an informal advisory group of outstanding people like Frank Stanton, Walter Lippmann, John Cowles, etc., to insure that there is fairness to all concerned, in these arrangements. (This is important because of the problem of giving reporters a chance to digest the findings before they file their stories, and also because we may need to make special technical arrangements to permit the New York Times and others to publish the entire 650-page summary volume.)

Our expectation is that the elapsed time between the Commission's report to you and the publication date of the summary volume should be two weeks, which brings us to Monday, September 14; we would thus avoid clouding Labor Day weekend with a somber subject. At the same time, September 14 is safely before the climactic weeks of the campaign.

The USIA hopes to be authorized to make careful preliminary distribution of the summary report so that it can be available on publication day everywhere in the world. This is a sensitive and difficult matter, because of the danger of leaks, but a good operation here by USIA could have favorable impact all around the world, in the light of the importance of convincing skeptics abroad that President Kennedy was not the victim of an enormous conspiracy.

The Government Printing Office, which is approaching this whole matter with a great sense of responsibility and discretion, plans to make the summary volume a model of a public document both in type face and in format. The Superintendent of Documents expects to be able to put copies on public sale at \$2 in paper cover and \$3 in hard cover. The 18 volumes of supporting evidence would sell at about \$30 in paper covers and \$45 in hard covers. No one can guess what the final sales may be. I am convinced that if this matter is properly handled, the report and the way of handling it can become both a reminder of the essential sobriety and strength of our system and a proof of your own mastery of its principles and practices. It is also obvious that renewed attention to the tragedy itself will provide a telling comment on the issue of government.

One item on which I do not yet have adequate information is the recommendations of the Commission on guarding the President in the future. I am talking to Harbo about that later this week and will report what I learn. These recommendations may require immediate action at the time of the Commission's report.

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-3-

What is currently needed is your approval or disapproval of the following proposals:

1. That we aim at presentation of the report on August 31 and its publication on September 14.

Approved ☒

Disapproved ☐

2. That you authorize us to plan for wide and dignified publication -- always subject to your own personal decision when the report is in fact presented to you.

Approved ☒

Disapproved ☐

3. That you authorize the preparation of contingency plans for the process of release both to the press and through USIA, for your later review.

Approved ☒

Disapproved ☐

4. That you authorize me to discuss these plans informally with the Attorney General in order to insure effective liaison with the Kennedy family.

Approved ☒

Disapproved ☐

We also plan to keep the press informed of the progress of the report.

Very truly yours,

John F. Kennedy

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July 13, 1964

MEMORANDUM TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

SUBJECT: Warren Commission Report

The President has asked me to report to you on the planning which is now going forward for handling the report of the Warren Commission. He wants to be sure that this matter is handled in a way which makes sense to you. We had hoped that the report might be at hand and ready for publication well before the Democratic Convention, but it now looks as if a schedule so tight might lead to slipshod work either by Rankin's draftsmen or by the Government Printing Office. So the Commission now plans to present the report to the President about August 31, and he expects them to order its prompt publication, with a release date of Monday, September 14.

As you know, the principal conclusions of the report will be that Oswald did it, that he did it alone, that Ruby was unconnected with Oswald, and that the theories which have been expressed by men like Lane and Buchanan are baseless. The report seems likely to contain some criticisms of those responsible for guarding the President and some suggestions for improvement, but I do not yet know in detail what these may be.

The report will consist of a summary volume of some 650 pages, and 17 volumes of supporting evidence and records. Our plan is to have both the summary volume and the record printed in unusually dignified and durable way by the Government Printing Office. Arrangements have been made for free distribution of a large number of copies to your family and within the government, and also to embassies and information agencies abroad. The Superintendent of Documents will make copies available to the public at quite reasonable prices: for the summary report \$1 in paper and \$2 in hard covers, and for the total record something like \$10 in hard covers.

Don Wilson of UNIA is handling plans for overseas distribution, which is a tricky matter because there will be enormous interest in the content of the report, and it is essential to avoid a leak. But we think this part of it can be managed.

Both newspaper and book publishers have expressed an interest in full publication of the summary volume, and we expect to make

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-1-

arrangements to provide access three or four days before release time so that the New York Times and others who are interested can print the whole document on the day of release. In this and other respects we expect to seek the advice of an advisory group on the handling of publication, which might consist of such people as Scotty Reston, Walter Lippmann, John Cowles, Frank Stanton, and perhaps Ray Graham.

There is also quite a tricky problem of television handling of the report, and we are hoping to persuade all members of the Commission to act with great restraint. Fortunately, the report will be unanimous in every respect, and if we are lucky they may be willing to leave any public comment to Lee Rankin, who is a dispassionate and dignified man.

Our whole effort is to handle this matter with as much dignity and openness as possible. If you or Jackie have any views or preferences at all, I know the President would be very glad to know them.

I enclose a copy of the table of contents of the summary volume as it is now planned. Obviously we in the White House are leaving everything connected with the contents of the report to the Commission itself. We are interested only in how it is presented to the people of this country and the world after it comes to the President.

McGeorge Bundy

Enclosure